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ALBANIA

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PRESS RELEASE

US GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES RESULTS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

TIRANA, ALBANIA—On March 2, 2006, the United States Government honored close to 200 Albanians who completed short-term training in the United States or Europe as well as those who received small grants during the past twelve months. The ceremony took place at the Tirana International Hotel at 10:30 with US Ambassador Marcie Ries and USAID/ Albania Mission Director Harry Birnholz addressing the participants.

Training is a key element of US Government assistance to Albania

Since 1993, USAID has funded and implemented the Participant Training Program in Albania carried out by World Learning. In 2005, 40 training programs, including grants, were conducted. The Participant Training Program, now called FORECAST, was established to equip a broad base of leaders and specialists in both the public and private sector with specialized skills and practical knowledge in order to develop and support democratic processes, rule of law, free enterprise, economic restructuring and improved quality of life in Albania. This past year the project provided training for central and local government officials and specialists, judges, private businessmen and women and NGO and community leaders, who had a beneficial impact on national development problems. During the past year Albanians have been trained in such fields as Judicial Inspection, Primary Health Care Finance and Information Systems, Tourism, City Council Strengthening, Ethics in Public Life, Small and Medium Enterprise Lending and Energy Database. Nearly half of the 192 participants are women.

Short term, job-related technical training involves bringing groups of selected participants to either another country in Europe or to the United States for approximately one to two weeks. This past year participants went to Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Israel, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom and the US for their programs of practical, hands-on training tailored to the specific needs of the group. All participants were required to design an action plan to achieve concrete benefits in Albania. Results from this year's group include a broad range of achievements from broader availability of SME credit and increased capacity to assess energy supply and demand to improved judicial inspection and to an increase in the number of international tourists. Some of the projects implemented through small grants include the repair of a field road in the Goriçan/Berat district, improved access to drinking water in Ersekë and street lighting in Kucovë, broader understanding of the benefits of local hybrid cord, a city council commission to monitor municipal procurement in Elbasan, and greater understanding of the need to include women in politics.

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